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## **Fish and Wildlife Service Proposes Endangered Status for Dunes Sagebrush Lizard**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) took action today to protect the dunes sagebrush lizard by proposing it as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The Service has also determined that critical habitat for the dunes sagebrush lizard is prudent — but not determinable — at this time. A 60-day public comment period will begin upon publication of this proposal in the *Federal Register*.

The ESA provides a critical safety net for America's native fish, wildlife and plants. This landmark conservation law has prevented the extinction of hundreds of imperiled species across the nation and promoted the recovery of many others. The Service has found that the dunes sagebrush lizard is presently in danger of extinction throughout its entire range, based on the immediacy, severity, and scope of the ongoing significant threats of habitat loss and fragmentation.

The dunes sagebrush lizard faces immediate and significant threats due to oil and gas activities, and herbicide treatments. The species is highly restricted in its range, and the threats occur throughout its range. Habitat loss and fragmentation due to oil and gas development is a measurable factor impacting the species due to the removal of shinnery oak and creation of roads and pads, pipelines, and power lines.

The ESA makes it illegal to kill, harm or otherwise “take” a listed species, or to possess, import, export or engage in interstate or international commerce of a listed species without authorization in the form of a permit from the Service. The ESA also requires all federal agencies to minimize the impact of their activities on listed species and directs the Service to work with federal agencies and other partners to develop and carry out recovery efforts for those species. Listing also focuses attention on the needs of the species, encouraging conservation efforts by other agencies (federal, state, and local), conservation groups and other organizations and individuals.

The dunes sagebrush lizard, found in southeastern New Mexico and adjacent west Texas, is a small, light brown lizard with a maximum snout-to-vent length of 2.8 inches for females and 2.6 inches for males. This lizard is a habitat specialist native to a small area of shinnery oak dunes extending from the San Juan Mesa in northeastern Chaves County, Roosevelt County, through eastern Eddy and southern Lea Counties in New Mexico. In Texas, the dunes sagebrush lizard is found in a narrow band of shinnery oak dunes in Gaines, Ward, Winkler, and Andrews Counties.

The Service is requesting comments or information from the public, other concerned governmental agencies, Native American Tribes, the scientific community, industry, or any other interested parties concerning this proposed rule. The agency will consider comments received or postmarked on or before February 14, 2011. Also, the Service must receive requests within 45 days for public hearings, in writing, at the address shown below by January 28, 2011. More information is available online at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/>.

For additional information, contact Wally “J” Murphy, Field Supervisor, New Mexico Ecological Services Field Office, 2105 Osuna NE, Albuquerque, NM, 87113; telephone 505-761-4781 or facsimile 505-346-2542. Persons who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 800-877-8339.

America’s fish, wildlife and plant resources belong to all of us, and ensuring the health of imperiled species is a shared responsibility. The Service is actively engaged with conservation partners and the public in the search for improved and innovative ways to conserve and recover imperiled species. To learn more about the Endangered Species program, go to <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/>.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov).